



KENT COUNTY SHERIFF DEPARTMENT
Lawrence A. Stelma – Sheriff

701 Ball Avenue, N.E. • Grand Rapids • Michigan • 49503



To: Citizens of Kent County
From: Deputy Jennifer VanSingel
Date: November 18, 2014
Re: Holiday Online Shopping Safety Tips

With the holiday season fast approaching, many of us will be doing some, if not all, of our shopping online. This is a \$46 billion industry that offers convenience and flexibility. However, it is also an attractive target for cyber criminals.

Cyber Criminals use multiple ways to prey on unsuspecting citizens including; fraudulent classified ads/auction sites, gift card scams, and resale of stolen items. The Kent County Sheriff's Office wants to remind everyone to be safe online this season and has provided the following tips to help make your shopping experience safer and more stress free.

1. Make sure you electronic device that you're using to make your purchase has up-to-date security software, programs, and applications.
2. If there is any doubt with the authenticity of the link, email, or online advertisement, don't click on it.
3. If the deal sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Be cautious of any communication that states an action must be taken immediately.
4. Do not share personal information over an unsecure wifi hot spot or network.
5. Make sure the website being visited is legitimate. There should be a closed padlock icon on the web browser or a web address that begins with "shttp" or "https".
6. Use a credit card to make your purchases, when possible. Never send cash or use a money-wiring service. Always double check your credit card statement for unauthorized charges.

If you believe you have been the victim of online fraud, report it to the appropriate organization right away. Advise your financial institution immediately so they can monitor for unexpected changes to your account and change your passwords to any account that has been compromised.